THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) At present, 481 Rail Travellers' Service Agents including 22 in Gujarat State are functioning on the railways. No Rail Travellers' Service Agents has been appointed in backward/rural/tribal areas of Gujarat;

(b) to (e) Appointment of Rail Travellers' Service Agents is done by the Zonal Railways in accordance with the statutory rules "Authorisation of Rail Travellers' Service Agents Rules, 1985" whenever the Zonal Railways feel the need to appoint travel agents at a particular station depending upon the volume of reservation work handled at that station. For this purpose applications are called for through press advertisements and the agents are selected as per the requirements fixed by the railways for a particular place.

[English]

Beedi Workers

881. SHRI T. GOVINDAN : Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government are considering to provide subsidy/financial relief to the people involved in Beedi Industries who are facing serious threat for their survival due to Government's unscientific policy towards this small scale industry; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM) : (a) and (b) Government have introduced various schemes for providing subsidy and loans to beedi workers for their housing, medical treatment including hospitalisation, educational and recreational needs. Moreover, the beedi manufacturing units which are registered as small scale industries, are also entitled for Central/State Government incentives, concessions and facilities as are available to SSI Units.

The Government have enacted several labour laws like the Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment Act, 1966; Minimum Wages Act, 1948 etc. which are applicable to beedi workers and protect their interests. In addition, there are several antipoverty and employment generation programmes for the rural and urban poor including beedi workers, being implemented by the Government.

[Translation]

Provide Telephone Facilities in Basia in Bihar

882. SHRI LALIT ORAON : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government propose to provide telephone service in Basia Divisional Headquarters of Gumla district in Bihar;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Government have received any application/representation in this regard; and

(d) if so, the action taken by the Government thereon?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) Yes Sir.

(b) 128-P C-DOT Exchange is proposed to be opened in Basia in 1997-98.

(c) Yes Sir.

(d) Action is being taken as indicated in (b) above.

[English]

Bailadila Mines

883. SHRI SUSHIL CHANDRA : Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state :

(a) the latest position in regard to the mining of iron-ore in the Bailadila region by M/s. Nippon Denro;

(b) whether the proposal to handover one of the NMDC iron-ore mines to this private company is still under consideration; and

(c) if so, the time by which the final decision is likely to be taken?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA) : (a) to (c) Based on the Government approval, NMDC signed a joint venture agreement with Nippon Denro Ispat Limited (NDIL) on 10th July, 1995 and a new Joint Venture (JV) Company namely Bailadila Mineral Development Company Ltd. (BMDC) was incorporated on 31st July, 1995. Care has been taken to ensure that the JV agreement provides for all the safeguards required to protect not only the interest of NMDC but also the local tribal people. Further, NMDC submitted its application to the Government of Madhya Pradesh for transfer of 11-B mining lease in favour of the JV company.

As per the provisions of the Mines and Minerals (Regulation and Development) Act, 1957 (MMRD Act), the State Governments have been empowered to grant, renew or transfer prospecting licences as well as mining leases for various minerals, since they are the deemed owners of the mineral property. However, in respect of minerals listed in First Schedule to the Act, which include iron ore, the State Governments are required to obtain prior approval of the Central Government for grant, renewal or transfer of prospecting licences or mining leases in respect of the scheduled minerals.

The Government of Madhya Pradesh recommended the proposal vide their letter dated 6.1.96 and sought prior approval of the Central Government from the Ministry of Mines, as required under the provisions of the MMRD Act, 1957, for transfer of mining lease of Bailadila Deposit 11-B in favour of the JV Company. While seeking the Central Government approval, the